

## Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

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TAGS: MORG, BA

SUBJECT: PRESS ARTICLE ON MIDEASTFOR

POST MIGHT FIND THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE BY MICHAEL  
PARKS ON MIDEASTFOR WHICH APPEARED IN BALTIMORE SUN ON  
18 MARCH OF INTEREST. QUOTE:

THE UNITED STATES IS ACTIVELY NEGOTIATING AGAINST A JUNE  
DEADLINE TO KEEP ITS SMALL NAVAL BASE HERE, THE HEAD-  
QUARTERS OF THE U.S. NAVY'S MIDDLE EAST COMMAND THAT MONI-  
TORS SHIPPING ALONG VITAL OIL TANKER ROUTES.

THE BAHRAIN GOVERNMENT, WHICH ASKED THE UNITED STATES TWO  
YEARS AGO TO LEAVE AFTER THE NAVY BASE BECAME CONTROVERSIAL  
HERE, IS NOW CONSIDERING THE POLITICAL COST OF ALLOWING THE  
AMERICANS TO REMAIN AFTER THE PRESENT LEASE EXPIRES IN  
JUNE.

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BAHRAIN OFFICIALS SUGGEST THAT THE U.S. FORCE -- A COMMAND  
SHIP, TWO DESTROYERS, A HEADQUARTERS AND REPAIR AND SUPPORT  
FACILITIES ON SHORE -- WILL BE PERMITTED TO STAY IF THE  
ISLAND-STATE'S NEIGHBORS DO NOT OBJECT.

AMERICAN OFFICIALS BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT THE FINAL DECI-

SION WILL REST ON THE POLITICAL IMPACT IN BAHRAIN ITSELF, WHERE LEFTISTS IN THE NOW DISSOLVED NATIONAL ASSEMBLY CALLED IN 1974 FOR THE NAVY'S OUSTER.

BAHRAINIS WERE THEN UPSET BY STATEMENTS OF HENRY A. KISSINGER, THE U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE AT THE TIME, THAT THE U.S. WOULD CONSIDER SEIZING MIDDLE EAST OIL FIELDS IF THERE WERE ANOTHER OIL EMBARGO. THEY HAD ALSO BEEN ANGERED BY AMERICAN MILITARY AID RUSHED TO ISRAEL IN THE 1973 WAR.

NOW, BAHRAIN SEES THE U.S. AS BOTH A MIDDLE EAST PEACEMAKER AND A STABILIZING INFLUENCE IN THE PERSIAN GULF AREA. "THE WHOLE REGION IS NOW LOOKING TO U.S. INITIATIVES IN THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT TO BRING PEACE TO THE MIDDLE EAST," SAYS TAREQ ABDEL RAHMAN ALMOAYYED, BAHRAIN'S INFORMATION MINISTER, "AND WE CONSIDER IT VERY IMPORTANT THAT THESE NOT BE UPSET NOR THE AMERICAN ROLE UNDERMINED.

"WE ALSO APPRECIATE THE AMERICAN DESIRE TO PRESERVE STABILITY IN THE GULF, AND THE AMERICAN AND GULF INTERESTS COINCIDE ON KEEPING THIS AREA AS CALM AND FREE FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAFFIC."

SHEIK ISA BIN SULMAN AL KHALIFAH, BAHRAIN'S RULING EMIR, HAS BEEN SOUNDING OUT HIS NEIGHBORS IN SAUDI ARABIA, KUWAIT, QATAR AND THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, HOPING THEIR SUPPORT WILL OFFSET IRAQ'S OBJECTIONS, ACCORDING TO ARAB DIPLOMATS HERE.

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"SHEIK ISA WILL HAVE TO TAKE THE DECISION HIMSELF, BUT IF HE CAN THROW SOME OF THE BURDEN ONTO BAHRAIN'S NEIGHBORS IT WILL EASE ANY DISCONTENT AT HOME," ONE ARAB AMBASSADOR SAID. "HE WOULD LIKE TO KEEP THE AMERICANS HERE, BUT THE COST OF GOING BACK ON HIS DECISION TWO YEARS AGO IS HIGH. UNFORTUNATELY, THERE IS NO EASY COMPROMISE."

THE U.S. NAVY WOULD CLEARLY LIKE TO KEEP ITS FACILITIES IN BAHRAIN, THE ONLY ONSHORE COMMAND IT HAS BETWEEN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA AND THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS.

STAFF OFFICERS SAY THE BAHRAIN BASE WOULD BE DIFFICULT IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE TO REPLACE, AND THE ALTERNATIVE OF A FLOATING COMMAND, THEY SAY, WOULD POSE SERIOUS PROBLEMS AND GREATLY INCREASED EXPENSE, ALTHOUGH IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE.

THE NAVY DOES NOT WANT TO REFIGHT A BATTLE IT ALMOST LOST WITH CONGRESS OVER A CONTROVERSIAL COMMUNICATIONS STATION

ON THE INDIAN OCEAN ATOLL OF DIEGO GARCIA IN ORDER TO DEVELOP IT FURTHER AS A COMMAND HEADQUARTERS.

THE ISLAND OF MASIRAH, BELONGING TO THE SULTANATE OF OMAN, WHERE THE BRITISH HAVE HAD AN AIR BASE, IS UNSUITABLE AS A NAVAL FACILITY.

"OUR SHIPS ARE NOT JUST SHOWING THE FLAG IN PLACES THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO US," A SENIOR NAVY OFFICER SAID, "BUT THEIR PRESENCE ADDS TO THE GULF'S STABILITY, AND THAT IS INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT TO THE UNITED STATES AS OUR OIL IMPORTS FROM HERE INCREASE. PEOPLE WOULD TAKE OUR WITHDRAWAL NOW THE WRONG WAY."

COMMANDED BY A REAR ADMIRAL, THE MIDDLE EAST TASK FORCE IS INVOLVED IN MONITORING SHIPPING ALONG THE REGION'S TANKER UNCLASSIFIED

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ROUTES, FOLLOWING SOVIET NAVAL ACTIVITIES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN, CONTINGENCY PLANNING FOR THE U.S. AND ITS ALLIES AND IN FLAG-SHOWING VISITS TO PORTS IN THE PERSIAN GULF, RED SEA AND INDIAN OCEAN.

AFTER ISRAEL'S RESCUE OF HIJACK VICTIMS FROM ENTEBBE LAST SUMMER, ONE OF THE FORCE'S DESTROYERS MOVED OFF THE EAST AFRICAN COAST WHEN UGANDA'S PRESIDENT, FIELD MARSHAL IDI AMIN, THREATENED TO RETALIATE AGAINST KENYA FOR HELPING ISRAEL.

BAHRAIN OFFICIALS SAY THAT, EVEN IF THE DOLS 4 MILLION-A-YEAR LEASE IS NOT RENEWED FOR THE ONSHORE FACILITIES, THE NAVY'S COMMAND SHIP, THE 16,000-TON, 500-FOOT LA SALLE AND ITS TWO DESTROYERS WOULD CONTINUE TO BE WELCOME HERE.

"WE DO NOT CONSIDER THESE A THREAT TO ANY OF OUR NEIGHBORS" MR. ALMOAYYED, THE INFORMATION MINISTER, SAID, "AND BAHRAIN'S PORT WILL ALWAYS BE OPEN TO FRIENDLY SHIPS." END QUOTE.  
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